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This is the first in a series of communications with the Diplomatic and Consular Community about the Office of Foreign Missions (OFM) and its development of an innovative E-Government program that will enable the Foreign Diplomatic and Consular community to apply for OFM and Office of Protocol services via the Internet.

Current processing of applications for OFM and Protocol services are labor and paperwork intensive. In its place, OFM plans to implement an Internet-based application that will free up limited resources now dedicated to repetitive data entry of paper forms. The new program will be piloted with 10 embassies in July 2004. After successful testing of the system, it will be implemented for all missions. Complete implementation is currently projected for October 1, 2004. At that time, the Department will notify all missions that applications and requests must be made electronically and that paper requests will no longer be accepted.

There are numerous benefits associated with E-government. The new program will reduce turn-around processing time on applications for OFM and protocol services and allow users to review the status of previous applications online. The E-Government program will improve the accuracy of requests as

system edits will detect and flag the most common data entry problems which must be corrected before an application can be submitted.

In an effort to engage the Diplomatic Community early in the process, OFM hosted a meeting for representatives of several foreign missions to announce the OFM E-Government project and to solicit candidates from that representative group to participate in the pilot of the E-Government program. Their principal concern raised at the meeting was the current lack of ready access to the Internet at the desktop at many embassies and consulates. Representatives of the Embassies did indicate that this upcoming requirement could be used to justify obtaining Internet access at each mission and consulate in the United States.

Missions are urged now to investigate and obtain access to the Internet as paper processing will be phased out completely, when this program is implemented. OFM will continue to apprise the Embassies and Consulates of progress in this program.

Enclosure: As stated. *[note: there is no enclosure]*

Department of State,

Washington, June 23, 2004

A handwritten signature or set of initials, possibly "JA", in dark ink.